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ABSTRACT

The background experiences of the rural student provide a wealth of ideas that can be expressed through poetry writing. Poetry forms which can be taught in the language arts class, or throughout the curriculum are: (1) the couplet, which contains two lines with ending words rhyming; (2) the triplet, which contains three lines with all ending words rhyming; (3) the quatrain, which contains four lines with diverse patterns of ending words rhyming such as line one with line three and line two with line four; (4) limericks, which have one set of rhymes for lines one, two, and five, and a different set of rhymes for lines three and four; (5) haiku, which has five, seven, five syllables respectively for its three lines; and (6) the tanka, which has a 5-7-4-7-7 progression of syllables per line, making a five-line poem. Language arts instruction for rural students should emphasize creativity. Creativity brings new ideas to modify, change, and improve the societal arena. As achievement progresses, students may wish to add alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphors, and similes within a poem. (KS)

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LANGUAGE ARTS IN THE RURAL SCHOOL

Students living on farms, on a small acreage in the country, or in cities of less than two thousand people surrounded by farm land, experience a rich, stimulating culture. The writer taught two years in a rural school. Surrounding the school building and playground were open fields for farming. In September farmers were busy disking and harrowing farm land. Next wheat was seeded. In latter October, the wheat had grown to a height of two inches revealing a beautiful dark green color. In November and December, the plants were dormant and sometimes covered with snow. The snow protected the plants from a cold winter.

One year cattle grazed on the wheat land during late fall and early spring. Grazing occurred if the wheat had grown very rapidly and could still do well with cattle feeding on the plants. Near to the school was a cattle feeding operation with approximately one hundred heifers and steers. Here, operators fed ensileage (feed from corn) augered down from a forty-five foot high silo. The unloading auger, operated by an electric motor, does away with shoveling the ensileage by hand.

The writer has pleasant memories of life on a farm with registered livestock, wheat and oats crops raised, as well as being a longtime 4H Club and Future Farmers of America (FFA) member.

Experiences in rural communities provide fascinating background information in developing a quality writing curriculum in the language arts. My wife and I still live in a rural area where the sounds of beef

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cattle, combines, tractors and attached farm implements, as well as wild life (turkeys and pheasants) abound.

Utilizing Background Experiences

The rural student needs to have ample opportunities to use what has been learned in the home and school setting. Learning activities reflect objectives in the language arts. Which learning activities in the language arts might students then pursue?

Creative endeavors are salient. Life in and of itself demands that individuals be creative to solve personal and social problems. Units on poetry writing may well emphasize relevant objectives emphasizing creativity in the language arts. A relatively easy kind of poem to write is the couplet, containing two lines with ending words rhyming. With background experiences from the home setting and audio-visual aids (videotapes, videodiscs, pictures, filmstrips, slides, and transparencies), the student, intrinsically motivated, may write the following couplet, as an example:

> The milk from the cow sank
> into the large bulk milk tank.

Each poem needs to have a title. In addition to a separate unit taught on poetry in the language arts, poems written by students may also be correlated or fused with content being studied in reading, science, social studies, and mathematics.

A triplet contains three lines with all ending words rhyming. With stimulation, motivation, and encouragement, the student, for example, may write:

Corn is purchased as seed
Later, it will provide cattle with feed
They will be able to eat all they need.

A quatrain contains four lines with diverse patterns of ending words rhyming such as lines one and two, as well as three and four. Or, lines one and three, as well as two and four may rhyme. The following is an example:

The combine separates the straw from the wheat
The air-conditioner in the cab keeps out the heat
Many acres can be cut in one day
The farmer works hard in the field if he may.

Limericks provide an interesting form of verse for students to listen to and write. LImericks have rhyme for lines one, two, and five, as well as lines three and four. The following is a model:

Once there were farmers using draft horses to farm
The horses could work long hours without harm
They pulled gang plows, harrows, and disks
When working too hard, the horse felt great risks
Alas! with too much stress, each horse felt an alarm.

Students should have ample opportunities to listen to the language arts teacher read orally, in a stimulating manner, diverse forms of verse. Thus when objectives emphasize the writing of couplets, the teacher needs to select meaningful and interesting couplets to read to pupils. The teacher might also share couplets he/she has written with students.

Verse without rhyme should also be written by students. Haiku poetry written by learners might well be a stimulating experience for rural school students. Haiku with its five, seven, five syllables respectively for its three lines stresses critical and creative

thinking, as well as problem solving. The following illustrates a haiku poem stressing the rural environment:

Sows with their litters
Baby pigs swarming around
Waiting for their milk

A variation of the haiku is to add two additional lines to form a tanka. The tanka has a 5-7-5-7-7 progression respectively of syllables per line, making for a poem of five lines.

Rural school students should experience

1. challenge in the curriculum.
2. readiness to attain vital objectives, experience quality learning opportunities, as well as evaluation procedures.
3. interest in ongoing activities.
4. meaning and purpose in learning.
5. provision made for individual differences in the classroom.

In Closing

Rural school students need to experience a quality language arts curriculum. Creative endeavors are vital to emphasize. Creativity is necessary to survive in society, as well as to bring in new ideas to modify, change, and improve the societal arena.

Poetry reading and writing may well assist to develop the creative person when writing couplets, triplets, quatrains, limericks, haiku, and tanka. Free verse should also be experienced by students. Free verse is open-ended with no rhyme or syllabication needed. The length of each line, as well as of the entire poem is up to the learner.

As achievement progresses, each student may wish to add alliteration, onomatopeia, metaphors, and similes within a poem. Students need to select the topic of poetry written, be it rural or non-rural topics.